

Mendicant orders in the Principality of Achaia and the Latin communal identity, 1204–1453

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Despite the fact that the Franciscan and Dominican Orders arrived in Latin Greece well armed with a specific mandate to engage and evangelize the Orthodox population in order to facilitate the implementation of Church union, little if any effort was made in this regard by the members of either order. Rather, reliant as they were on the Latin secular authorities for protection, support and sustenance, they appeared content to spend their tenure in Greece ministering almost exclusively to the Latin segment of the population, becoming deeply involved in the political, economic and cultural life of the Latin states. This was to the utter detriment of their original mission to the Orthodox. Thus, this article examines the role of mendicants in Achaia as contributors to the Latin cultural identity, especially in the episcopal context.

In the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, the provinces of *Graecia* and *Romania* were founded in Latin Greece by the newly minted Dominican and Franciscan orders respectively, with a clear mandate from Rome and mendicant policymakers such as Humbert of Romans to engage the Greek Orthodox population in the work of evangelization.¹ This was undertaken with a view towards implementing the union of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches that Innocent III considered to have been the de facto result of the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204. That such a mission failed almost entirely was a result of many factors, including the nature of the political situation — wherein the Villehardouin, the princes of Achaia, guaranteed the Orthodox religious freedom in return for political quiescence — as well as a predisposition of the Greek population to hostility towards the Latin conquerors and their faith. Most important, though, was the role that the mendicants themselves came almost exclusively to play as ministers to the Latin population.

¹ The Franciscan order was granted official recognition by Pope Innocent III in 1210; the Dominican order was granted the same recognition in 1215. For detailed description of Humbert's ideas on how the conversion of the Orthodox should be effected, see Humbert of Romans, OP, *Opus Tripartitum, Appendix ad fasciculum rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum*, ed. E. Brown (London 1690) 185–229.

Why were the Franciscans and Dominicans so quiescent in this regard, so ready and willing to be, for lack of a better word, co-opted? The answer to this lies in the fact that the mendicants in the Peloponnese were literally dependent on the Latin government for their very survival. In very real terms, the story of the mendicant presence in Greece as a whole can be described as a sort of symbiotic relationship with the Latin community; the prince, his court and the Latin population offered protection, support and patronage to the mendicant establishments in return for mendicants directing their efforts in the main not towards the Greek population, but towards the bolstering and nourishment of the Latin cultural identity, and, in some cases, the Latin presence in the Peloponnese itself.

As in the West, mendicant houses were barred by their rule of poverty, however variously interpreted,² from cultivating the sort of self-sufficiency that property ownership, agriculture, husbandry and the like could bring, such as that enjoyed by the older, property-owning orders, the Cistercians and Benedictines.³ They were thus entirely dependent on the local population for their daily bread, for the donation of properties in which to live, work, teach and pray. In medieval society, East and West, only towns and cities of a certain size and wealth were able to support a ministry such as this, which relied on organized begging and charity for its livelihood, since only townspeople would have possessed a sufficient surplus of disposable wealth. Country-dwellers, apart from the landed nobility, lived too close to subsistence to be able to afford to support a mendicant presence in any permanent fashion.⁴ This fact is highly significant in our case, for we know that in Achaia, the Latin presence was restricted to the towns and fortified garrisons in the hinterland which formed islands in a sea of Greek-dominated countryside. Interaction with the Greek population would have been at a minimum, for even where they represented a majority of the population, they were free according to law to contribute to their own ecclesiastical establishments, which of course they did.⁵

2 For a description of the Franciscan and Dominican ideals and interpretations of poverty, see C. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe* (London 1994) 33–4, 60–3, 68–9, 157–8, 223–4.

3 None of which, interestingly, enjoyed much of a lasting or very visible presence in Achaia, save the Cistercians, who nevertheless disappear in the 1270s, not to reappear again. See P. Lock, *Franks in the Aegean* (London and New York 1995) 223–6, 229–30; B. Panagopoulos, *Cistercian and Mendicant Monasteries in Medieval Greece* (Chicago 1979) 78–96; E. A. R. Brown, ‘The Cistercians in the Latin empire of Constantinople and Greece, 1201–1276’, *Traditio* 14 (1958) 63–120; B. Bolton, ‘A mission to the Orthodox? The Cistercians in Romania’, in D. Baker (ed.), *The Orthodox Churches and the West* (Oxford 1976) 169–81.

4 Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 256.

5 Latins, on the other hand, had to ask permission to bequeath property to the Church, although whether this covers monastic establishments (or only parochial/diocesan ones) is uncertain. See P. W. Topping, *Feudal Institutions as Revealed in the Assizes of Romania, the Law Code of Frankish Greece* (Philadelphia 1942) 31, no. 25. There is evidence that Greeks, or at least *Gasmouloi*, in Achaia did on occasion remember mendicant establishments. The will of the master cook Paul de Gondiano or ‘Mastropoulos’ of Patras states that the Franciscan house of St Nicholas Blatteros (a formerly Orthodox establishment) should be his inheritor if his daughter Romandia should die without legal heirs. The names of Paul and his daughter suggest a *gasmoulos* context. See E. Gerland, *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Erzbistums Patras* (Leipzig 1903) 122.

Thus, in order to survive, the mendicants would have been concentrated necessarily in these urban areas, which in most cases were coastal, outward- (i.e. western-) oriented, and Latin-dominated, culturally and economically. This seems to have been the case from the earliest days of their arrival.⁶ We do know for instance that the Franciscan provincial of Romania, at least in the fourteenth century, resided in Clarentza, the Villehardouin capital on the north-west coast of the peninsula; it was in this capacity that a certain Pietro Gradenigo was called upon by the General Master of the Hospitallers in 1321 for advice in the matter of whether it was preferable that the principality, then under his protection, should be subject to the Catalans or the Venetians, ‘being unable to bear the continual vexations of the Greeks’.⁷ Pietro, not surprisingly, counselled an alliance with Venice, while trying not to anger either the Greek emperor or the king of Aragon, and in that same year, he wrote to Venice on the Grand Master’s behalf.⁸ Apart from establishing Clarentza as the centre of fourteenth-century Franciscan life in Greece, this little incident shows us that the leading Franciscans of Achaia were deeply embroiled in its political life; it also indicates the great esteem in which Gradenigo, as the Franciscan provincial, was held. Lastly, it shows his Venetian sympathies.

In short, if the mendicants wished to eat and prosper, it was to the Latins that they would have turned. Restricting themselves and their labours to the Latin ‘cantonments’ of Achaia certainly would have made the mendicants’ lives easier, and more profitable.

Further, the mendicants, as an actively supportive part of the Latin community of Achaia, can be said to have participated in, and even perpetuated, its inward-looking exclusivity, its rather fortress-like mentality regarding the Greek majority subject to its rule. This was a mindset born of the chronic insecurity of the Latin position as overlords of the peninsula, a position that rapidly grew ever more tenuous as the despotate of Mistra increased in power. Quite simply, in view of their small numbers and the hostile environment in which their state was planted, Latins had to stick together, for mutual protection and for what might be seen as the sort of mutual encouragement that often binds together occupiers of a colonial outpost; it is this sort of exclusivity that provides the glue to hold intact the shreds of cultural identity carefully transplanted from home — art, language, religion and law. These distinctions are important, because apart from the source of personal definition, they also provide a means to set the rulers, in this case the Latins, above and apart from the ruled. In other areas of Latin-controlled Greece, the authorities with the same need to dominate confronted the problem of governing a foreign majority in very different ways, with a very different outcome. In those areas, for example the Genoese colonies, where authorities chose to address their lack of numbers by allowing

⁶ First mention of a Dominican house in the Peloponnese is in 1228, the Franciscans, in 1247. See R. J. Loenertz, ‘Documents pour servir à l’histoire de la province dominicaine de Grèce’, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 18 (1944) 72–115; L. Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, ed. J. M. Fonseca, 17 vols, III (Rome 1931–5) 39.

⁷ G. Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell’Oriente Francescano*, 5 vols, III (Rome 1906–27) 224.

⁸ Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, III, 224.

the two segments of society to intermix, without real regard for the artificial preservation of Latin cultural identity, allowing economic concerns (that is, profitability) to guide policy and bind the two segments of the population together by common interests, it is striking how quickly the rulers were absorbed into and willingly adopted the culture of the dominated.⁹ Within the context of Achaia, it seems that the ‘zeal for souls’ of the Franciscans and Dominicans was constrained by their participation in a certain Latin solidarity based on the fear of Greek hostility and the possibility of revolt.

Such fears were not ill founded.¹⁰ That they were taken very seriously from the earliest days of the principality is seen by Geoffrey I’s readiness to treat with the *archontes* as guarantors of their people’s quiescence, and his scrupulous observance of Greek religious freedom.¹¹ Regarding the mendicants, one may observe a particular distaste that seems to have preceded them to Greek lands and which only grew over time and with greater exposure to mendicants themselves.¹² If they were content to segregate themselves from the Greek population, why did the mendicants come in for such particular castigation? It is possible that anti-mendicant feeling was fanned by Greek monks who were unhappy about the friars being granted formerly Orthodox properties such as Blachernes.¹³ The Greek hierarchy in exile and the *papades* who remained would also have been incensed by mendicants appearing in formerly Orthodox sees. Also mentioned was the complete lack of evidence for mendicant charitable works, which might have sweetened their relations with the Greeks. The peninsula on the whole, however, seems to have been a relatively rich one, and, by comparison, its Greek inhabitants safer and more prosperous than their compatriots elsewhere.¹⁴ This prosperity could have blunted such a tool as charitable undertakings, had they been pursued as a means towards evangelization. The Greek community in general was not of a mind to accept mendicant charity, and probably would have shown little interest in their schools, had these been open to Orthodox students.¹⁵

9 C. Delacroix-Besnier, *Les Dominicains et la chrétienté grecque* (Rome 1997) 75.

10 As proven most strikingly in the Cretan context by the fourteen revolts between 1207 and 1365.

11 *To Chronikon tou Moreos*, ed. J. Schmidt, 2nd edn (New York 1979) ll. 1612–50, 1706.

12 Panagopoulos, *Cistercian and Mendicant*, 10; T. Violante, *La Provincia Domenicana in Grecia* (Rome 1999) 80, 102; Delacroix-Besnier, *Dominicains*, 41, 63.

13 It should be remembered that such grants would not only have included the use of a building, but most probably the profits from its landholdings.

14 An anonymous fourteenth-century English Franciscan en route to the Holy Land extols the civility, the fertility and the prosperity of the peninsula as he travelled from Clarentza cross-country to Koroni. He was particularly taken with the wines to be had in Clarentza, that *castello nobilissimo*: Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, IV, 430.

15 The most famous beneficiary of mendicant charity in Greece would have been the beggared orphan who was rescued from the streets of Candia by an anonymous Franciscan, and who, becoming a friar himself, eventually resurfaced as Pope Alexander V. See F. Ehrle, *Der Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia* (Münster 1925) 4–7. Cardinal Bessarion founded a school on his own property outside Candia, with the express purpose of educating Greeks to become good Catholics, but there is no evidence that it ever became very popular or particularly successful. See N. Panagiotakis, ‘The Italian origins of early Cretan literature’, *DOP* 49 (1995) 295–6.

More important, however, is the fact that the mendicants, given their prominence in Latin affairs of Church and State, would have constituted some of the most visible faces of Latin rule, especially for urban Greeks. Thus, they would have provided the Greek population with a convenient butt for complaint: in their characteristic garb, they would have easily become almost iconic symbols for the Latin Church. Moreover, at least in more well-informed circles, it would have been recognized that on numerous occasions the mendicants had been commanded by the papacy to preach crusades against ‘the schismatic’ Michael VIII Palaiologos, and in defence of the Latin states of Greece.¹⁶ Innocent IV in 1243 had written to the provincial of the Dominicans resident in Clarentza, indicating that he should hand over one-tenth of his province’s income for the support of the Latin patriarch in Constantinople, who had been impoverished through the ‘malice of the Greeks’.¹⁷

Clearly, it must have appeared to the Greeks that the mendicants were firmly set upon the strengthening and extension of Latin domination, rather than addressing themselves to Greek concerns. Philip Incontri O.P., the Inquisitor of the early fourteenth century, was famously the target of Greek opprobrium and disgust, not because he spent his career in Greece chasing Orthodox faithful – on the contrary, his inquisitorial work was concerned mainly with Jews and ‘Judaizing’ Latins, as well as the Fraticelli – but perhaps simply because he was something of an ecclesiastical celebrity in the area, and so became a personification of the Latin Church.¹⁸ He was accused variously of pederasty and other ‘disgraceful vices’, which fact was lamented by Demetrios Kydones in letters to his cousin Georgios, resident philosopher in Mistra and fellow Latinophile who looked to Incontri as confessor and spiritual director.¹⁹ Another clue to anti-mendicant feeling can be extracted from this incident, as Georgios was vehemently opposed to Palamism: given its eventual triumph in the Orthodox world, mendicant association with, and indeed advising of, such as Georgios would have been enough to give them a bad reputation.²⁰

16 *Les Registres d'Urban IV*, ed. J. Guiraud, II (Paris 1901) no. 131, 46–8. To be fair, they were also charged to preach, in the fourteenth century, a crusade against the Turks, Byzantium’s great menace. In 1345, Clement IV encouraged the Master General of the Franciscans: ‘in singulis sui ordinis contra Turcas christifidelibus in Romaniae seu Graeciae aliisque circumvicinis locis degentibus tanta mala inferentes crucem faciat praedicari’. See *Bullarium Franciscanum*, VI, 327.

17 *Les Registres de Innocent IV*, ed. E. Berger (Paris 1884–1920) nos. 33, 94.

18 Delacroix-Besnier, *Dominicains*, 36; R. Loenertz, ‘F. Philippe de Bindo Incontri’, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 18 (1948) 265–80.

19 J. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota nova* (Paris 1884, repr. Hildesheim 1962) 202–3.

20 Incidentally, the triumph of Palamism forced Georgios to leave Constantinople, journeying first to the Holy Land, then Cyprus, Rhodes, and finally to the Morea, where he found a greater degree of tolerance for his views. Another point to bear in mind is that travel in the fourteenth century from Constantinople to the Morea seems to have been relatively easy, safe, and inexpensive; simple monks are known to have made the journey to take care of their own, or their monasteries’, affairs. This could have promoted the spread of anti-mendicant opinion from Constantinople to Greece. See A. Laiou-Thomadakis, ‘Saints’ Lives of the late Paleologan period’, in A. Laiou-Thomadakis (ed.), *Charanis Studies* (New Brunswick 1980) 99.

Finally, however, we are given the most valuable indication of the nature of Greek dislike for mendicants from the words of Incontri himself, as he explained the development of his own relations, and those of his fellow Dominicans, with the Greeks:

At first, when I used to talk to them, the monks and priests fled from us as from excommunicates or heretics; they made a great fuss to allow us even to get permission to look inside their monasteries or churches. We could hardly find someone to give a drink of water to one of our men who were thirsty, and when he had drunk, they would break the cup or throw it away. However, when I began to deal with them more familiarly, meeting informally, debating with them and answering their points, *I tamed them* [author's italics], so that after ten years they no longer avoid us; indeed they eat and drink together with us and we with them.²¹

Men like Incontri were to be avoided, mocked, made little of and even reviled because they were *dangerous*. In this excerpt, he shows himself to be clever, patient, persistent and psychologically sensitive in his approach to the Greek community; the success of his approach is obvious. The Orthodox clergy who wished to make Incontri and his like a figure of fun and revulsion did so because they realized the potential power of such men: the conversions within their own ranks were evidence enough of that power. Evidence, however, of such successes in operation on a wider scale is very sparse indeed, if not actually non-existent, and in the end it appears that the Greek clergy should not have been so worried: the limits imposed on the mendicant mission were largely of their own making, or made, at the very least, with their tacit consent.

Thus, the political exigencies of the day, the small numbers of the Latin population, and the wariness of the Greek majority, all contributed to the emergence of a peculiar sort of interdependence and mutual support which grew up between the Latin lay authorities and the mendicant orders of the Peloponnese. In this way, the two became inextricably bound together in a working relationship that had as its primary focus the conservation and consolidation of the Latin communal identity. The mendicants came to Greece with the twofold mission of providing 'spiritual assistance' to the Latins resident there, and seeking to return the Greek schismatics to unity with Rome.²² That the first (and arguably lesser, given the presence of other Latin clergy in Achaia) of these tasks overtook the latter is undoubted. However, not only did the Franciscans and Dominicans confine themselves to the Latin segment of their mission, but in doing so, their activities were far from being limited to 'spiritual assistance.' Because of their favoured status in the principality, their work ranged far beyond preaching and pastoral care, to deep involvement in political, economic and social affairs of the day. Naturally, this involvement is greatest amongst those mendicants who were placed in positions of power, by their orders, the pope, or by

²¹ T. Kaepelli, 'Deux nouveaux ouvrages de Fr. Philippe Incontri de Pera', *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 23 (1953) 179.

²² Fedaldo, *La Chiesa Latina in Oriente* (Verona 1976) 100.

the princes and their successors, as provincials or as bishops. Thus it is to these that we look in order to discern more clearly the nature of this involvement.

Apart from the occasional inquisitor like Incontri, or the brethren of the Constantinople/Pera houses who were involved in the conversion of Byzantine intellectuals, it was as provincials and bishops that we hear of mendicants making their greatest mark in Latin Greece. In Achaia, we are able to draw a tentative picture of their activities as taking place on four basic levels. First is that of ‘international’ affairs: or relations between the principality and its neighbouring powers, particularly Venice, as well as with the papacy and with powers in the West. Second, mendicants are also seen to have had an interest in the internal affairs of the state itself. Third, where mendicants are the occupants of a see, we have abundant evidence of their interest in local affairs, in roles that range from armsdealer to the executor of wills. Lastly, there are some clues that allow us a glimpse of these men tending to their personal affairs, both in their official and unofficial capacities.²³

As one of the barons of Achaia, the political, moral and military authority of an archbishop of Patras was uncontested; in such a position, a mendicant would have been in a position of great influence.²⁴ Perhaps because of the city’s strategic location, Venetian influence in Patras was especially high, as opposed to the rest of the principality. This influence seems only to have grown over time, for by the opening of the fifteenth century, the city itself was in Venetian hands.²⁵ Mendicants appointed to Greek sees tended to match the ethnicity of whichever Latin power happened to be in control of the area in which their see was located, although it seems that most of these mendicants, both Franciscan and Dominican, were brought from the West expressly for this purpose, rather than chosen from among the mendicants already living in part of the Greek provinces.²⁶ We know that, likewise, the convents in Methoni were staffed from the Lombardy area, and in Achaia itself, the inhabitants were first Franks, and then, after the passing of the Villehardouin, increasingly Italian, from Venice as well as elsewhere. This is true most clearly in the case of the mendicant provincials.²⁷ Thus, in Patras and elsewhere, it was

23 For a fascinating glimpse into the life of a Latin cleric of Achaia on all these levels (although neither a mendicant, nor a prelate), see G. Dennis, SJ, ‘The Correspondence of Rodolfo de Sanctiis,’ in Dennis, *Byzantium and the Franks, 1350–1420* (London 1982) 285–321.

24 *Libro de los Fechos et Conquistas del Principado de la Morea*, ed. A. Morel-Fatio (Geneva 1885) 129 n. 587; Fedalto, *Chiesa Latina*, 349.

25 *Chronique de Morée*, ed. J. Longnon (Paris 1911) 238–9; *To Chronikon tou Moreos*, ed. Schmidt, 558–60, ll. 8606–50. In 1440 the Franciscan provincial was a certain Ludovicus de Venetiis, lately prior of the convent of St Nicholas in Patras. See Gerland, *Neue Quellen*, 122.

26 K. Eubel, *Hierarchica Catholica*, 3 vols (Rome 1913), I, 89, 105, 210, 212, 290, 322, 324, 351. See Lock, *Franks*, 210: ‘During the fourteenth century, the Latin hierarchy in Greece became markedly more Italian in its ethnic composition. It also tended to be recruited from one or other of the two great mendicant orders, but seldom from those serving in Greece.’

27 Fedalto, *Chiesa Latina*, 88; Delacroix-Besnier, *Dominicains*, 140. There is even an example of a Catalan prudently appearing as Franciscan provincial at exactly the period (ca.1300–1310) when the Catalan Company was in its ascendancy in Latin Greece; this can hardly be dismissed as coincidence. See Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, III, 39.

far from unusual – in fact, perfectly natural – for mendicant bishops and provincials to be found conducting business on behalf of, or in reference to, the Venetian Republic.

We know of at least one provincial who filled this role. This was Pietro Gradenigo, Franciscan provincial of Romania, to whom in 1321 the General Master of the Hospitallers turned for advice as to whether he should place the principality under the protection of the Catalans or the Venetians; unsurprisingly, Gradenigo counselled reliance on Venice; although his predecessor had been a Catalan, and probably would have given rather different advice.²⁸ As it was, Gradenigo acted in conjunction with a fellow Franciscan, Guglielmo Frangipani, the contemporary archbishop of Patras. Together they sent a letter to the doge offering him the principality and imploring his protection. In return for Frangipani's favouritism, in 1336, the year before he died still in residence, both he and his nephew were offered honorary citizenship by the Republic in recognition of his 'generous and benign treatment of [Venetian] cares and merchants'.²⁹ Clearly, Frangipani was a friend to Venice in more ways than one, and at a time when the Catalan menace was great, he sought to make his city a sympathetic haven which the Republic would have reason to defend.

That the bishops of Koroni and Methoni would be entwined in Venetian interests is obvious. News of the nomination of Giovanni Raolceti, OFM, to the see of Koroni in 1351, was transmitted not only to the archbishop of Patras, as well as the cathedral chapter, vassals, and people of Koroni, but also to the doge himself, Andrea Dandolo – as a common courtesy, since it is probable that his prior approval would have been necessary in the case of any appointment to a Venetian colony.³⁰ The upheaval surrounding the appointments of another Franciscan bishop of Koroni, Pietro Corner, further illustrates just how politically involved were these appointments. Urban V made him bishop of Koroni in 1367, in the heat of the Great Schism. Patras, in 1375, was occupied by Paolo Foscari, who had declared himself for Urban VI. This was enough to make the Avignon pope Clement VII wish to be rid of him.³¹ In 1384, Clement attempted to remove Foscari by 'promoting' him to the titular see of Tarsus, and to put Corner in his place.³² However, Paolo remained stubbornly in Patras with the support of Urban and of Venice itself. Upon his death, Clement offered the see, in revenge, to Angelo Acciaiuoli, Venice having no interest in an Acciaiuoli occupying such a prominent see. Corner once again was put forth

28 Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, III, 224.

29 A. Bon, *La Morée franque: recherches historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe (1205–1430)*, 2 vols (Paris 1969) 203; Fedalto, *Chiesa Latina*, 356–7.

30 Eubel, *Hierarchica*, I, 22.

31 Apart from being involved in Schism politics, Foscari seems to have been a rather poor judge of character: he bestowed a canon's stall and prebend on his good friend Rodolfo de Sanctiis, who had three illegitimate children by three different women and possessed a Greek slave named Omorfia. Foscari later had to discipline him for misuse of Church funds, as well as, rather predictably, loose living. See Dennis, 'Rodolfo de Sanctiis', 292.

32 Gerland, *Neue Quellen*, 132–4; Eubel, *Hierarchica*, I, 22, 394; Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, V, 133; Fedalto, *Chiesa Latina*, I, 352.

as a compromise candidate, and this time, supported by a mysterious ‘party within the city’, his candidacy was successful.³³ As see such as Patras existed at a literal and figurative crossroads, a place where the interests and intentions of numerous powers intersected, and its occupiers had to be men who knew how to juggle these different interests and play them to their own advantage. Mendicants like Corner were just such men: supporters of Venice, the Catalans, the prince, who could be relied upon to look after their own in the volatile environment of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Greece.³⁴

As illustrated by the case of Corner, the papacy, too, had its own agenda where Greek appointments were concerned, although the goals of a pope in championing a particular appointee are sometimes difficult to discern. This was so in the case of Alvaro Pelagio, OFM, who was nominated in 1332 by John XXII to the see of Koroni after the pope had rejected the election of Francesco di Luca by the cathedral chapter. Luca may have been an adherent of John’s rival, yet it is doubtful that Pelagio ever took up his post, as the following year he was transferred back home to Silvas in Portugal.³⁵

Provincials and mendicant bishops also had the duty of drumming up financial support for the Latin patriarchate, as was the case when pope Alexander IV wrote to the Franciscan provincial, insisting that he enforce heavier tithing: he was instructed to call an assembly of all the churchmen in Romania, if need be, and tell them in the pope’s name to pay up.³⁶ We may assume that Alexander chose the Franciscan provincial for such a (thankless) task, either because he was not linked to one bishopric, and/or because he was known to have sufficient persuasive powers of one sort or another to be capable of carrying it out.

As in the West, religion and secular affairs were not compartmentalized, and trusted clerics were often preferred over laymen as civil servants. It is in this capacity that the mendicants of the Peloponnese appear most often: as servants of the secular powers. It was Pietro Corner, after all, who presided over not one but two congresses of the magnates of the peninsula, once as bishop of Koroni in 1382, and again in 1387 as archbishop of Patras.³⁷ The purpose of these meetings was to secure a peace treaty between Achaia and Venice. In order to understand fully the delicate position of Corner, it is necessary to take into account the contemporary struggle for rights to the principality, which provided the backdrop for this congress. The claimant, Amadeo of Savoy, was backed by the Avignonese Clement VII (Corner’s champion); the Roman pope Urban VI wished to appropriate Achaia for the Holy See. Furthermore, the Navarrese captain Pierre de St

33 Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, V, 133; Eubel, *Hierarchica*, I, 212; *Bullarium Franciscanum*, VI, 753, 844, 1008.

34 See Violante, *Chiesa Latina*, 50, for the reliance of Dominicans in the Aegean on Venice as a protector and patron.

35 Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, III, 414; Eubel, *Hierarchica*, I, 212, *Bullarium Franciscanum*, V, 549 n. 1023, *Lettres communes de Jean XXII*, ed. E. de Boccard (Paris 1921) no. 1566.

36 *Les Registres d’Alexandre IV*, ed. C. Bourel de la Roncière, J. Deloye, A. Coulon, 3 vols. (Paris 1895–1959) 2072.

37 Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, V, 133.

Superan was styling himself prince, backed up by his considerable military forces. It was Corner who, as a Venetian aristocrat, a mendicant and a baron of the principality, was in a prime position to treat with the various warring factions, and bring a measure of peace and security to Achaia; however, it is not difficult to imagine that his disparate loyalties must have also proved difficult to reconcile.

As with Corner, mendicants as bishops in the Latin hierarchy of Achaia could be entrusted with difficult, dangerous or distasteful tasks that others were unable to undertake, abroad as well as within the peninsula itself. Nearly a century and a half earlier, in 1249, the Franciscan bishop of Andravida, Giovanni de Tolono, was called to Palermo to crown Ludovicus, the child-king of Sicily, after the death of his father Peter II. This was done in the presence of the Sicilian prelates but without their assistance, as they were prevented from carrying out the coronation itself because of the papal interdict laid over the island.³⁸ In this case it is interesting that the faction of Ludovicus had to look so far afield for a sympathetic cleric; it is also interesting that the one they found was a Catalan Franciscan serving in a Frankish see located in the principality of Achaia. Tolono was willing to brave the papal interdict to carry out this very politicized and partisan act, and seems to have received no censure for it, either from his order or from the papacy itself.

Mendicants, both as provincials and bishops in Latin Greece, provided other services to the lay powers that were of a more mundane diplomatic nature – as marriage contractors. In the registers of Nicholas III, we find a notice to the effect that the archbishop of Athens, the Dominican provincial of Graecia, as well as his Franciscan counterpart, were charged with arranging and drawing up the contract for the marriage between John of St Ademaro, great-grandson of the king of Hungary and *marescallus* of the prince, and Catherine, William de Villehardouin's granddaughter and 'widow of a certain Guglielmo, soldier of Verona'.³⁹

More appropriately for their office, mendicant bishops and provincials also appear tending the Church's business in the peninsula of a more strictly ecclesiastical nature. In 1301, the Catalan Franciscan Girolamo, provincial of Romania, headed a committee of fellow friars gathered in Clarentza to receive the Latin patriarch of Constantinople on his way back to the East from Venice, in order to provide him with a list of eighteen articles of accusation against the outspoken leader of the Franciscan 'Spirituals', Angelo Clareno, and his followers, who were then refugees in Italy after having been hunted in the East.⁴⁰ The provincial was anxious, it seems, to prove his own credentials of Franciscan orthodoxy by denouncing Clareno, who after all was not even to be found on Greek soil. Ninety years later, we come again to Corner, in 1391, dealing with deviators of a different sort, that is to say, of clerics still embroiled in the Great Schism. He wrote to a certain Blaise of San Miniato, who 'by reason of certain letters of the archbishop of Naxos, adherent of Boniface IX, has been promoted and consecrated bishop of Stampalia'. Corner indicates

38 Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, IV 364; *Bullarium Franciscanum*, VI, 657 n. 19.

39 *Les Registres de Nicolas III*, ed. J. Gay (Paris 1932) IV, 26, no. 1.

40 Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, III, 39.

that if Blaise is willing to abjure his schismatic ways and return to obedience, he can remain in his see, otherwise, he must get out.⁴¹ Frangipani, apparently what Fedalto calls a ‘man of command’, was keen on keeping his suffragans in their sees, and he refused Giacomo of Methoni permission to retain a residence in Rome because the doctor had prohibited him from the use of horses; the pope had to intervene on Giacomo’s behalf.⁴² Such absenteeism was not an isolated occurrence, as over a hundred years earlier Rainerus de Papia, Franciscan bishop of Maina, received permission to reside in Italy because he found his see uncomfortably close to the battlefield with the despotate of Mistra.⁴³

It is in their local services to the papacy that we see how mendicants of the Peloponnese truly related to its Greek inhabitants and also put into practice the Church’s somewhat disorganized and illogical policy regarding Orthodoxy. On one hand, Wadding tells us rather vaguely that Franciscan Giovanni da Ripatransone, made provincial in 1335, ‘worked zealously for the cause of union’, without going into further detail other than the fact that he led a legation of unknown purpose to the Byzantine court.⁴⁴ On the other hand, we have the cases of Frangipani and another archbishop of Patras, Bartolomeo Papazurri OP. Frangipani, as mentioned, received complaints from John XXII that Latins in his see were participating in Greek rites and sacraments: the most frequent offenders were the Catalans. Frangipani was to intervene immediately, since by such behaviour ‘divina maiestas offenditur et religioni detrahitur’.⁴⁵ The singling out of the Catalans shows here that, in some way, this accusation was probably more of an excuse to excommunicate the Catalan Company (which Frangipani eventually, obediently, did, as well as preaching a crusade against them at the behest of the pope in 1330), than evidence that large-scale defection was taking place amongst the Latin faithful of Patras. A few decades later, in 1364, Papazurri was given by the Master General of the Dominicans the right to absolve a friar in his see who had been censured for violating this same rule against communion with the ‘uncatholics’.⁴⁶ Indicative of both trends – the sympathetic as well as the contemptuous – is the case of the apostolic legate to Greece, Lorenzo da Orte, OFM, who in 1246, enjoined all Latin rulers in the East to give their protection to the Greeks, ‘whatever their laws’ (that is, whosever rule they happened to live under), and not to consent to any molestation of them by Latins; indeed, for any injuries they suffer at Latin hands, they have the right to demand satisfaction. However, any Greeks rebelling against Latin rule may and indeed should be punished by ecclesiastical censure.⁴⁷ This was the sort of ‘carrot and big stick’ approach that the Latin Church chose to utilize in its relation with the Greeks, especially those under Latin rule: the Orthodox were treated as wayward children to be coaxed back into obedience, or, barring that, punished for their intransigence. In

⁴¹ *Bullarium Franciscanum*, VI, 844.

⁴² Fedalto, *Chiesa Latina*, I, 356.

⁴³ Eubel, *Hierarchica*, I, 105.

⁴⁴ L. Wadding, *Scriptores Ordinis Minorum* (Rome 1906) 153.

⁴⁵ *Acta Ioannis XXII (1317–1334)*, ed. A. Tautu (Vatican City 1952), VII.2, 120–1.

⁴⁶ Fedalto, *Chiesa Latina*, 1, 365.

⁴⁷ Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, I, 215.

carrying out such policies, our mendicants were far from the ideals of Humbert of Romans set forth in his guide to intelligent evangelization, the *Opus Tripartitum*, or indeed from the maxim of Dominic himself, who entered into a disputation, it is said, ‘not that you or I may have the upper hand, but that the truth may emerge’.⁴⁸

As well as their involvement in international affairs, mendicants as bishops in Latin Greece are seen as major players in the political, economic and social life of their sees as well, especially in the case of Patras, where the archbishop was also the temporal lord. Frangipani, with his Venetian connections, proved a boon for the city under Catalan attack; one sees why he was so keen to place them under the ban, using the ecclesiastical weapons at his disposal as well as those of a more conventional sort. Like many medieval bishops, he had no qualms about taking active part in the defence of the city, by acting as an armsbroker with the Republic. Throughout the 1320s and 1330s, Patras received regular shipments of munitions from Venice at his request.⁴⁹ Undertaking negotiations of another sort, with a different enemy, the Dominican Papazurri in 1363 rescued the archbishop’s castle in Patras, from which his predecessor had been ousted by the Acciaiuoli, when he and the cathedral canons agreed to pay 5,000 gold florins in ransom.⁵⁰

In the economic realm, mendicants appear chiefly as witnesses or participants in sale transactions, as was the case with the prior of St Nicholas in Patras, and later provincial of Romania, Franciscan Ludovico de Venetiis, who witnessed a document on behalf of the convent indicating the exchange of a garden and *hospitum* for a winepress. Under his administration the convent was particularly popular, being remembered in wills, and even going so far as to get involved in inheritance disputes with the heirs of one of their benefactors.⁵¹ Bishops for their part regularly exercised the office of notary, and witnessed contracts, both Latin and Greek. Corner, for example acted as witness to a property transaction written in both languages, although he signed himself in Latin, ‘frater Petrus Dei Gratia aep. P. legatus Romaniae’.⁵² This power seems to have been granted by Rome, as it is noted that Giovanni Raolceti, OFM, bishop of Koroni in 1351, received the authority *contrahendi mutuum*, up to the sum of 500 florins, and four years later, Innocent IV granted the same privilege to Francesco da Massa, OFM, then archbishop of Corinth.⁵³

48 Dominican popular wisdom attributes this quote to Dominic; no written source could be found.

49 Gerland, *Neue Quellen*, 23.

50 Fedalto, *Chiesa Latina*, 365.

51 Gerland, *Neue Quellen*, 122, 199. In 1430, Bartolomeo Zane de Visnadeli of Treviso indicated his desire to be buried in the church with his wife, and left 200 *hyperpera* for this purpose. In the same year, the convent entered into an inheritance dispute with Ioannis, son of Stamatolos Spanopoulos. It is impossible to tell whether Spanopoulos, obviously Greek, was making a gift to the Franciscans because he was a convert or because of other concerns, perhaps in order to ingratiate himself with a powerful local group of Latins. This is seen often in the case of Cretan Greeks who regularly left bequests to mendicant houses as well as Orthodox *mones*; the same was true in the case of the Venetians in Crete. See S. McKee, *Uncommon Dominion* (Philadelphia 2000) 110–14.

52 Gerland, *Neue Quellen*, 45.

53 *Bullarium Franciscanum*, IV, 576 n. 2; VI, 495.

Lastly, we find a single anecdote to illustrate just how far some, if not all, these mendicant bishops had removed themselves from the original ideals of the *vita apostolica*. Our old friend Corner in 1395 played host to the notary Nicolo de Marthonio, who was returning to Italy from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Nicolo writes admiringly of Corner's palace and its long hall, which was frescoed with the 'whole story of the destruction of Troy'; if Corner was not particularly interested in the contemporary Greeks, he obviously had some appreciation for their ancient predecessors. Marthonio notes further that Corner is (rather incredibly) a Franciscan, and simultaneously a man who dominates the city and its surroundings both temporally and spiritually. He also laments that the income of this see, formerly 25,000 ducats, had now shrunk to the sum of 15,000, more or less.⁵⁴

Thus, we find that it appears the Franciscans and Dominicans of Achaia, abrogating their mandate of engagement and conversion, carved out a safe and comfortable niche for themselves within the Latin cultural, social, political and economic milieu, a niche in which they were willingly sheltered from contact with the Orthodox segment of the population – at least, from contact at the intimate, grass-roots level which the theoreticians of mendicant evangelization recommended.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Golubovich, *Biblioteca*, V, 133. In contrast to Corner's luxurious lifestyle, however, William of Moerbeke, OP, the scholar-bishop of Corinth, lived in the local Dominican convent rather than the bishop's palace. See Violante, *Provincia Domenicana*, 85.

⁵⁵ This appears to have been the case in most of the areas of Latin Greece where mendicants were found. The intellectual circle of converts connected with the Dominican house in Pera, including Kydones and the Chrysoberges brothers, was something of an anomaly, related to particular elements of the social and intellectual climate of the capital.